



## 86 MSS/DPC Civilian Personnel

# Newsletter
















*December 2003*



















For US Civilian Employees and Their Supervisors  
<http://www.ramstein.af.mil/86mss/cpo>

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## *Message From The Personnel Officer*

The end of December marks six months for me being the Civilian Personnel Officer @ Ramstein AB -- have we been busy or what! As each of us face the many challenges of 2004, don't forget to look back to reflect on all your accomplishments made in 2003. At this time, I like to make New Year's resolutions not only for me personally, but for the office as well. One of our big challenges in 2004 will be the implementation of the National Security Personnel System (NSPS), the new personnel system authorized in this year's National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). We will keep you alerted to the changes as we receive them from USAFE, Air Force and DoD.



As you seriously ponder over your New Year's resolutions, consider the following:

### GREAT TRUTHS THAT ADULTS HAVE LEARNED:

- 1) Raising teenagers is like nailing Jell-O to a tree.
- 2) Wrinkles don't hurt.
- 3) Families are like fudge...mostly sweet, with a few nuts.
- 4) Today's mighty oak is just yesterday's nut that held its ground.
- 5) Laughing is good exercise. It's like jogging on the inside.
- 6) Middle age is when you choose your cereal for the fiber, not the toy.

The men and women of the Ramstein Civilian Personnel Flight wish you and yours a safe and happy holiday season and the brightest of new years!

mhm  
MARCIA H. MILLER  
Civilian Personnel Officer  
86MSS/DPC DSN 480-2052



## **Affirmative Employment Customer Service Hours**

The Customer Service (Employment) Office hours are 0800-1600 daily. Customer service representatives can answer your employment related questions and other general questions.

The Affirmative Employment Human Resource Specialist/Assistants do not begin taking walk-in customers until 1200 daily. This allows them uninterrupted time to rate the large volume of applications received, prepare and issue timely referral certificates, and process all the necessary paperwork to ensure various personnel actions are processed in a timely manner.

Individuals who show up before 1200 should go to the Customer Service Office. If the representative is unable to answer your question, he/she will take a message for the Staffing Specialist/Assistant to contact you. If there is an urgent matter, you will be referred to the Section Chief for immediate assistance. We appreciate your continued support.

## **Am I an “External” or an “Internal” Employee?**

This distinction is important, especially if you are interested in applying for positions. You are considered "internal" if you occupy a PERMANENT position serviced by the Ramstein Civilian Personnel Flight. An "internal" employee may be on a competitive service (e.g., career or career conditional) or excepted service (e.g., family member) appointment. It is important for excepted service family member employees to understand that they are "internal" candidates while in USAFE; however, they are not “internal” for other Air Force positions outside of the commuting area of their civilian or military sponsor.

An "external" candidate is any individual not currently on a PERMANENT appointment with the Air Force or serviced by the Ramstein Civilian Personnel Flight (e.g., temporary employees, Army employees, NAF/AAFES employees). External candidates must apply for positions at the Customer Service Counter, Ramstein Civilian Personnel Flight, Building 2120, Room 125. New announcements are posted every Friday, closing date on Thursdays.

NOTE: Family members on excepted service appointments wishing to be considered for positions in the United States prior to or in conjunction with the PCS move of their sponsor, must apply as “external” candidates. For more information on how to apply for positions in the US, please contact your servicing Human Resource Specialist/Assistant.

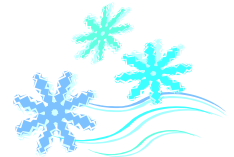
For announcements that have been expanded to candidates beyond the commuting area (e.g., DoD or Federal-wide), go to <http://www.usajobs.opm.gov>. Since these announcements are handled by the Regional Personnel Center at Sembach, the announcement will direct you to forward your application and related documents directly to them.

## Self-Nominating: Current Air Force Employees

Under the Modern Defense Civilian Data System (DCPDS), permanent Air Force employees must self-nominate to receive consideration for Air Force positions. RESUMES ARE NOT REQUIRED AND MAY CREATE PROBLEMS IN THE SELF-NOMINATION PROCESS IF ENTERED INTO THE SYSTEM. All internal Air Force vacancies will be posted on the HQ AFPC Civilian Employment Home Page, and the Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS) Job Line (see changes to job announcement article below). Internal candidates must view job announcements and self-nominate before the closing date of the vacancy announcement.

“Internal” employees may self-nominate for employment consideration by:

- Calling the HQ AFPC IVRS (from Germany) at 00-800-1997-2378, or
- Accessing the HQ AFPC Civilian Home Page at:  
<http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/resweb/>



## IMPORTANT Changes to Job Announcements on the AFPC Web Site

The Air Force recently made a change to vacancy announcements posted on the AFPC website. Previously, all announcements opened only on Fridays and closed on Thursdays. Now position announcements will open any day of the workweek for a minimum of five workdays. Although, this currently does not apply to USAFE positions, it is extremely important for individuals seeking employment outside of USAFE to check the website more than once per week or to register in CANS.

### CANS Registration

For those of you who have not registered in the CANS (Civilian Announcement Notification System), now is the time to do so. By registering in CANS, you will no longer have to continually check for Air Force job vacancies.

CANS is a very user-friendly program. Once you're logged on, the system will take you through the process step by step. All you need to do is list your specific job criteria, and CANS does the rest. Once the criteria are established, it will last for 180 days before expiring. You can list up to 20 different criteria combinations. The information can be changed at any time, initiating another 180-day cycle.

The system will automatically search for jobs based on your search criteria; if there are any matches, an email will be sent to you listing the job announcement number, description, pay plan, occupational series, grade, job location, closing date and the announcement's URL. As a safeguard; however, you may wish to continue checking the AFPC job website on a weekly basis.

## **Civilian Personnel Online**

Air Force civilians can now easily find links and descriptions of civilian customer self-service and online resources. This web page is designed to give civilian employees and job seekers a 'one-stop' shopping list of the informational pages and web applications available for their use. Visit the web site at <http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/dpc/civpersonline.htm> for more information.

## **Civilian Employment Planning and Advance Recruitment**

Supervisors of civilian employees should always be engaged in "employment planning". This is easy to do for civilians because each has an established rotation date -- either the 3-year or 5-year date for non-family member civilians or the sponsor's DEROS date for family members. If you have been through the recruitment process recently, you know recruitment can take quite some time -- even local recruitments can take up to 90 days. To reduce the potential lapse rate and ensure coverage in civilian positions, we must take a proactive approach for filling US civilian positions. As soon as you anticipate a civilian vacancy, whether part of the normal rotation (DEROS) or otherwise, contact your servicing human resources specialist to begin the recruitment process. For civilians that have an established DEROS, we will notify you at least 8 months prior to the DEROS and ask you to submit a Request for Personnel Action (RPA) to begin the advance recruitment process. This allows our office sufficient time to recruit and allows the selectee sufficient time to process for an overseas move. Our office conducts all "local" recruitment. Positions covered by a Career Program are handled by the designated Career Program at the Air Force Personnel Center and all "internal" certificates and DoD wide or Federal wide (outside of the commuting area) recruitment are handled by the Regional Personnel Center at Sembach -- expect longer recruitment timeframes.

## **Equal Employment Opportunity**

We've all seen the statement on job opportunity bulletins, "All qualified applicants will receive consideration without regard to political affiliation, marital status, sex, age, non-disqualifying physical or mental disability, national origin, or any other non-merit factors." Air Force managers and supervisors are held responsible and accountable for upholding the principles of equal opportunity in all decisions regarding the personnel management process. It is Air Force policy that all personnel management decisions are free from discrimination and ensures equal opportunity for all applicants and employees.

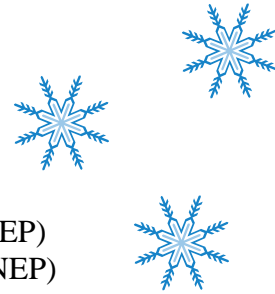
## **Special Emphasis Program (SEP)**

Each Air Force installation has a program called the Special Emphasis Program (SEP) that addresses the unique and special concerns of minority, women, and disabled employees. Each SEP has a special manager (SEPM) assigned to help develop and administer their SEP. The SEPMs are appointed to work with the Chief of Affirmative Employment, Civilian Personnel Flight. We are currently seeking interested individuals who, on a collateral duty basis

(approximately 20% of their duty time) will spend time working their respective SEP programs and take an active part working on one or more of the various ethnic observance sub committees throughout the year.

Managers are needed for the following programs:

- Black Employment Program (BEPM)
- People with Disabilities Employment Program (PDEP)
- Asian American/Pacific Islander Employment Program (AA/PIEP)
- American Indian/Alaskan Native Employment Program (AI/ANEP)



Managers should release employees, on duty time, to serve on SEP committees and to participate in SEP sponsored activities. If you are interested in serving as a Manager or on one of the committees, please contact Ms. Diana Hendrix, at 480-7055.

## Virtual Career Brief

The on-line virtual career brief is available to US civilian employees through the AFPC Secure website at <https://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/afpcsecure/default.asp>. This application is located along with other automated civilian personnel processes such as the employee benefits information system (EBIS) and is identified as *Civ Career Brief - Virtual Career Brief for AF Appropriated Civilian Employees*.

The virtual career brief contains all the information "real time" found on the standard career brief that now must be requested through the Civilian Personnel Flight. The following categories of information are located on the on-line career brief: Current Position Data, Certification/Language Proficiencies, Appointment Information, Pay/Benefits, Overseas, Special Placement, Career Program, Experience Current, Experience History, Education, Training, Awards, Appraisals, and Acquisition (if applicable). *The information contained in the virtual career brief may be printed using the "landscape" mode.*

If you find missing or incorrect information, i.e., awards, training, education, or experience, go to <http://www.ramstein.af.mil/86mss/cpo/newcpo/staffing/SUPPQUAL.doc> for a supplemental qualifications form. Print, fill out, and submit this form to your servicing Human Resources Specialist/Assistant with any supporting documentation, as necessary.

Questions regarding awards should be directed to Employee/Management Relations at 480-2008, training and education should be directed to Training at 480-2167, and work experience should be directed to Affirmative Employment at 480-7055.

Employees who are unable to access the brief may request a copy by sending an e-mail to the 86 MSS/DPCS Inbox or calling DSN 480-7055.

## Electronic Official Personnel Folders (EOPF)

The Electronic OPF is an "electronic filing cabinet" where a Federal employee's personnel actions and other pertinent documents/information are stored.



All documents created for actions effective on or after 1 October 1996 are filed in both an image or an electronically created data file in the Personnel Automated Records Information System (PARIS). This Electronic OPF is available for viewing and/or printing at your local workstation or Civilian Personnel Flight (CPF). If you were hired into Federal service after 1 October 1996, you will have a completely Electronic OPF. If, however, you were on the Federal roles prior to 1 October 1996, the Regional Personnel Center (RPC) at Sembach maintains the paper OPF along with its electronic version.

## Printing copy of SF50, Notification of Personnel Action

Go to AFPC Homepage: <http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/>

Double click on "Electronic Personnel Folder" next to "Civilian Personnel"



On the next screen, double click on "EOPF". If you need to set up your PC, follow the instructions after clicking on "Setup Page".

Current employees, who have established a USERID and Password, can type those in and click on "Secure Login" (right hand side of screen). New users will have to follow instructions in "Create Password Accounts Here".

After successful login, you will reach the secure sites. Click on "Civilian Electronic OPF". This will take you to the EOPF Documents. Double click on the SF50 you want to review/print. The SF50 will show up as a Formflow document.

**MAKE A COPY FOR YOUR SUPERVISOR TO ANNOTATE AND/OR PLACE IN YOUR FOLDER.**

## Prohibited Personnel Practices

Prohibited personnel practices are those things a Federal employee with personnel authority may not do. A Federal employee has personnel authority, if they can take, direct others to take, recommend, or approve any personnel action. This includes appointments, promotions, discipline, details, transfers, reassignments, reinstatements, or any decisions concerning pay, benefits, and training. Changes to the law were made to protect whistle blowers and people with veteran's preference. A personnel action includes any significant change in duties, responsibilities, or working conditions, which is inconsistent with the employee's salary or grade. People with personnel authority -- managers and supervisors -- are charged with avoiding prohibited personnel practices.

Prohibited Personnel Practices:

- ☼ Don't DISCRIMINATE on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, handicap condition, marital status, or political affiliation.
- ☼ Don't SOLICIT or CONSIDER any personnel recommendation or statement not based on personal knowledge or records of performance, ability, aptitude, general qualifications, character, loyalty, or suitability.
- ☼ Don't COERCE an employee's political activity.

- ☀ Don't DECEIVE or OBSTRUCT any person with respect to such person's right to compete for employment.
- ☀ Don't INFLUENCE a person to withdraw from competition.
- ☀ Don't GRANT any preference or advantage not authorized by law, regulation, or rule.
- ☀ Don't EMPLOY or PROMOTE a relative.
- ☀ Don't RETALIATE against a whistle blower, whether an employee or an applicant.
- ☀ Don't RETALIATE against employees or applicants who exercise their appeal rights, testify, or cooperate with an inspector general or the Special Counsel, or refuse to break the law.
- ☀ Don't DISCRIMINATE based on actions not adversely affecting performance.
- ☀ Don't VIOLATE any law, rule, or regulation implementing or directly concerning the merit principles.
- ☀ Don't VIOLATE veterans' preference requirements.

Avoiding prohibited personnel practices will not guarantee you will never have to defend a decision or action, but it will give you a firm basis from which to start. You should remain conscious of merit system principles and prohibited personnel practices; problems you can cause yourself by not keeping the legal requirements in mind.

## Dual Compensation Act

Employees are reminded that the Dual Compensation Act (5 U.S.C. 5533) prohibits employees from receiving pay from more than one civilian U.S. Government position (including temporary, part-time, or intermittent appropriated fund, non-appropriated fund (NAF), or Army Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) for more than 40 hours of work in any calendar week. There is no restriction on the number of appointments the individual may hold, only upon the number of hours for which he/she may be paid (e.g., an employee may work for NAF and AAFES so long as the pay received is not for more than 40 hours a week).

## Merit System Principles

The merit system principles are the public's expectations of a system that is efficient, effective, fair, open to all, free from political interference, and staffed by honest, competent, and dedicated employees. As the federal government experiences continued change in the management of human resources (centralization, deregulation, delegation, etc.), it becomes increasingly important that line supervisors and managers incorporate the merit system principles into every decision process they use.

The merit system principles are:

- ☀ Recruit qualified individuals from all segments of society and select and advance employees on the basis of merit after fair and open competition.
- ☀ Treat employees and applicants fairly and equitably, without regard to political affiliation, race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, age, or handicapping condition.
- ☀ Provide equal pay for equal work and reward excellent performance.
- ☀ Maintain high standards of integrity, conduct, and concern for the public interest.
- ☀ Manage employees efficiently and effectively.
- ☀ Retain and separate employees on the basis of their performance.
- ☀ Educate and train employees when it will result in better organizational or individual performance.
- ☀ Protect employees from improper political influence.

☀ Protect employees against reprisal for the lawful disclosure of information in "whistle blower" situations (i.e., protecting people who report things like illegal and/or wasteful activities).

## Nepotism

Nepotism occurs when relatives are in the same chain-of-command. A management official with authority to take personnel management actions may not select a relative for a position anywhere in the organization under his/her jurisdiction or control. Also, management officials, or other public officials having the authority to appoint, employ, promote, or advance persons or to recommend this action, may not advocate or recommend a relative for a position in the Department of Defense. 5 CFR 310.102 defines relatives as follows:



Aunt	Brother
Brother-in-Law	Daughter
Daughter-in-Law	Father
Father-in-Law	First Cousin
Half Brother	Half Sister
Husband	Mother
Mother-in-Law	Nephew
Niece	Sister
Sister-in-Law	Son
Son-in-Law	Stepbrother
Stepdaughter	Stepfather
Stepmother	Stepsister
Stepson	Uncle
Wife	



The Affirmative Employment Section is responsible for ensuring, at the time of “appointment”, that nepotism does not occur. When it does occur, corrective action is taken immediately. Corrective action will be made and involves the following offices: Civilian Personnel, management officials in the organization affected, the Wing Legal Office, and the employee affected. Should you have additional questions regarding this topic, please speak to your servicing staffing specialist.

## USAFE Test on Candidate Express Referral Process

In mid-November, the Spangdahlem and Mildenhall Civilian Personnel Flights (CPF's) began testing a process to get candidate referral lists to the selecting official “quicker”.

Under the current referral process, the CPF Human Resource (HR) Spec/Asst screens every applicant for “eligibility”, “category determination” (i.e., veteran’s or military spouse preference) and “qualifications”. Only qualified, eligible candidates are referred to selecting official. This process results in a “scrubbed list” of candidates who can be selected, but it also requires additional time and effort to screen all candidates for qualifications.

Under the test referral process, the HR Spec/Asst screens every applicant for “eligibility” and “category determination” only. All eligible candidates are referred to selecting official without “qualifications” screening. The selecting official will be asked to identify his/her “top 3 selectees” in rank order and the HR Specialist/Assistant will review selections in rank order for qualifications. If the selection is valid, the applicant will be appointed.

We anticipate implementation at Ramstein in January 04. Further information/guidance will be distributed at that time.

## **Time-Saving Flexibility for Staffing U.S. Positions**

When filling US civilian vacancies, managers have the option of requesting “by name” a specific individual at the outset of the recruitment action. While this represents a departure from the more conventional approach to filling positions (i.e., referring multiple candidates), it is not a new process and has been used successfully at many Air Force bases for both “internal” and “external” recruitment actions. Contrary to urban legend, this is not “pre-selection.” Benefits include streamlining and expediting the referral process, and reducing the amount of time spent by supervisors reviewing records of eligible candidates. By-name requests must rank among the group of best qualified who would have been referred on the certificate under the conventional process. The individual must also be eligible for referral/consideration (e.g., not exceeding 5 years in overseas area; not “ordinarily resident”; etc.) Contact your servicing Human Resources (Staffing) Specialists/Assistants at 480-7055 for additional information.

## **Federal Information on the Web**

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) website ([www.opm.gov](http://www.opm.gov)) is a great, one-stop source for finding up-to-date information about current issues and news related to Federal Employees. One feature called “Hot Links” gives you new and pertinent information on current topics. “What’s New?” has current information in date order for news releases and Federal Regulation changes, as well as other useful information.

## **Online Career Program Registration**

While career program registration is not required to self-nominate (apply) for vacancy announcements, it is a prerequisite for some career program activities. Some career programs require registration for eligibility for managerial assessments or interviews, which are used to enhance competitiveness in the rating and ranking process and for training and development (i.e., career broadening or enhancing assignments, short-and long-term training, management and executive seminars and other leadership development opportunities). To register, go to the AFPC website at <https://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/>. Select “civilian” from the menu at the top of the page; select “career programs”; then “civilian career management homepage”; then “interactive”; and then “career program registration”. At the bottom of that screen, click on “enter the online career program registration”.



## *Employee / Management Relations*

### **5 Work Days of Excused Absence on Return to Civilian Employment for Activated Military Members**

In recognition of the sacrifices activated civilian employees have made, President Bush has directed that all agencies grant 5 work days of excused absence (time card code "LV"), without charge to leave, to these employees upon notification to their employing agencies of their intent to return to Federal civilian employment. This request covers all employees who were activated for military service in connection with Operation Noble Eagle, Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, or any other military operations subsequently established under Executive Order 13223. Agencies may grant this period of excused absence prior to the employee's resumption of his/her duties, or at a time mutually agreeable to the agency and the employee, if the employee has already returned to duty.

**In addition, this is retroactive to include those already activated and returned to Federal civilian employment. Questions may be addressed to your servicing Human Resources Specialist (Employee Relations) at DSN 480-2008.**

### **Excused Absence for Physical Fitness WAS IST LOS!**

We in Employee Management Services (86 MSS/DPCE) have received many queries since HQ USAF/DP endorsed excused absence for physical fitness activities regarding when the program will be implemented at Ramstein AB. After addressing several issues for the Non-US employees, policy guidance is in formal coordination. When final approval is received, a Key Manager E-Mail will be prepared for dissemination of policy guidance to all managers, supervisors, and employees. In the interim, current 86 AW Policy permits US employees to structure their day around core hours or use their established lunch period in conjunction with their earned credit hours. In addition, management can accommodate employees' request for the use of annual leave, compensatory time, and/or earned time off awards in order to participate in physical activities. (86 MSS/DPCE, 480-2008)

### **Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) Addresses Concerns Raised by Employees**

In an effort to address concerns raised by employees with respect to identity theft, DFAS intends to mask part of the social security number (SSN) on the hard-copy Leave and Earnings Statement (LES). Effective pay period ending 24 January 2004, employees will only be able to view the last four digits of their SSN. Electronic LESs at <https://mypay.dfas.mil/mypay.asp> will continue to display the nine digit SSN.

Any questions concerning this change may be directed to the 86 Comptroller Squadron, Civilian Pay Section at 480-5548/5549/5630/5639 (Press extension 927) or [https://wwwmil.ramstein.af.mil/86aw/cpts/Civpay/Civ\\_Pay.html](https://wwwmil.ramstein.af.mil/86aw/cpts/Civpay/Civ_Pay.html).

## Thinking About Retirement?

Retirement is one of the most important events in your life. A successful retirement takes careful planning on your part. Hopefully the planning began early in your working career to help insure that you will have the income you need when you are ready to retire.

The retirement process itself is very simple for most people. However, if at all possible, there are several things you should do well in advance of your planned retirement so that there are no surprises when you separate.

Your most valuable step in planning for retirement is to contact your servicing Human Resources Specialist (Employee Management Relations (EMR)) for pre-retirement counseling. This will tell you whether you are eligible to retire on the date you have in mind, whether you will be eligible to keep your health and life insurance coverage as a retiree, whether there are deposits or re-deposits you may want to pay, and how much you can expect to receive as an annuitant.

Keep in mind that if your retirement package is not complete when forwarded to the Office of Personnel Management, the processing of your retirement may be delayed. However, if you take time to plan accordingly by making sure your records are complete, you should be able to proceed without any problems. Your Human Resources Specialist (EMR) will assist you.

More detailed information about retirements can be found at <http://www.opm.gov/retire/> or <http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/dpc/best/retirements.htm>. Requests for retirement counseling should be referred to your servicing Human Resources Specialist (EMR). To find out who your servicing specialist is, call DSN 480-2008.

## Living Quarters Allowance (LQA)

For those US employees drawing an allowance for LQA, there are a few things you need to know and must follow. They are:

1. You **must** keep all bills for utilities (no bank statements!). We also need receipts for rent if you don't have a standing payment through your bank. Utilities that are reimbursable under LQA include heat (oil, gas or electric), electricity, water, sewage, trash and separate expenses for a single garage rental.
2. You have to provide copies of those bills to 86 MSS/DPCE for reconciliation purposes. Reconciling your LQA will identify if you are owed money from the Government or, if you owe the Government money.
3. Reconciliation of your LQA is **mandatory** after the 1<sup>st</sup> year in your permanent quarters! Appointments need to be scheduled with **86 MSS/DPCE (480-5774)** within 45 days of your anniversary.



4. You must notify 86 MSS/DPCE immediately if you vacate, or move from the off-base housing for which LQA was authorized, and/or if a reduction in the number of dependents living with you occurs.

5. Stay within your authorized allowance! You will not be reimbursed for expenses incurred in excess of the amount you are authorized to spend.

6. You are paid this allowance for yourself and dependent family members. Employees drawing LQA who share quarters with another individual drawing LQA, employees who rent from another individual drawing LQA, or employees who let or sublet any part of their permanent quarters must notify 86 MSS/DPCE immediately to avoid overpayments.

*If you are PCSing please remember the following:*

It is important that you contact **86 MSS/DPCE (DSN 480-5774)** to arrange for reconciliation (if needed) and termination of your LQA and Post Allowance. Doing so will prevent an overpayment and eventual indebtedness to the Government.

If a reconciliation of your LQA is necessary upon your departure, please make sure you schedule an appointment ahead of time and provide 86 MSS/DPCE with all of your receipts for rent and utilities as described under “Living Quarters Allowance (LQA)”, paragraph 1 above upon your appointment.

Please contact 86 MSS/DPCE at least 30 days prior to your departure to discuss transitional entitlements (i.e., Temporary Quarter Subsistence Allowance). Claims for pre-departure expenses must be filed with this office prior to leaving the installation. You must provide your paid receipts for lodging in order to be reimbursed.

## **Requests for Orders-PCS, Separation, RAT Be Timely and Accurate**

Travel requests must be accurately completed to provide detailed personal information and submitted to Peter Voss, 86 MSS/DPCE, Bldg 2120, Room 217 at least 30 days in advance of the travel date. We ask your assistance in carefully and accurately completing the Request for Orders to preclude the additional time needed to process amendments to the original orders when information is missing or wrong. If unsure of what is needed on the request, address questions to Peter at 480-2196. We would rather continue to process new orders' requests rather than stop and process amendments. The Request for Orders may be pulled from our CPO Homepage: <http://www.ramstein.af.mil/86mss/cpo> and delivered to him as stated above, faxed to 480-7054 or e-mailed to [hanspeter.voss@ramstein.af.mil](mailto:hanspeter.voss@ramstein.af.mil) (86MSS/DPCE, 480-2196).

## **Student Educational Travel**

The Department of State Standardized Regulation (DSSR), Section 280 and Volume 2, Joint Travel Regulation (JTR), Chapter 7, paragraph C-7005 authorize education travel. College-

student dependents of civilian employees receiving living quarters allowance (LQA) are authorized, at government expense, space-required travel for college education in the U.S. One round trip per school year is authorized.

The anniversary date is established at 12 months after the student begins the first leg of the annual round trip. The return trip may be taken at any time within the 12-month period. (For example, the student may leave in Aug 03 to attend school and may return overseas in May 04. Also, the student may leave in August 03 to attend school and may return overseas in Dec 03. The anniversary date is August each year. In the second example, the round trip to school after the seasonal holiday and return overseas for summer break is at employee's expense. In each instance above the employee would not be able to take the next round trip to the US at government expense until Aug 04). Round trips, or portions thereof, that are not taken cannot accumulate to a subsequent 12-month period.

Transportation is between the employee's overseas duty station and the college location. IAW Vol 2, JTR paragraphs C-2306 and C-7005, shipment of 350 lbs unaccompanied baggage is authorized. Under paragraph C-7006 E, per diem is authorized for the time required to travel by the authorized transportation mode in accordance with paragraph C-4553. Effective 23 Mar 03, a new change in law was implemented allowing reimbursement to employees for storage costs of the student's unaccompanied air baggage instead of having it shipped back to post from the student's school.

The age limit for education travel is 22 years, before the 23<sup>rd</sup> birthday. A registration/acceptance letter from the applicable school administrative office is required for travel to attend college. For return travel to the overseas location, administrative verification that the student completed a full-school year is required. (Student must attend/complete a full program at the undergraduate level for college education or technical institution that offers courses leading to a degree, certification, or license.) Request for travel orders and applicable documentation should be submitted to the Civilian Personnel Flight, 86 MSS/DPCE at least 30 days in advance. (86 Mission Support Squadron/DPCE, 480-2196).

## Department of Defense National Relocation Program (DNRP)

*(Applies to Career Program Employees Only)*

Effective 15 Oct 03, changes in DNRP's Guaranteed Home Sale (GHS) and Property Management (PM) services became effective. Employees eligible for GHS must have their house listed for 60 days before they can enroll in DNRP. Current Air Force employees whose PCS is to a designated Career Program position at the GS-12 and above grade level and the Senior Executive Service are eligible to use the GHS. The move must be in the United States, to include Alaska, Hawaii or US territory or possession, such as Guam. Persons transferred to Career Program positions at OCONUS locations are not entitled to allowances for real estate expenses. Employees returning from a completed OCONUS tour to a Career Program position other than the one they left to go overseas may be eligible for DNRP services.



The Property Management feature of DNRP will no longer be offered. However, the Federal Travel Regulation allows federal agencies to provide a property management (PM) program to eligible employees transferring to an assignment in foreign areas. Employees who self procure



PM services may be eligible for reimbursement of up to 10% IAW para C15050-B2 of the JTR. The orders or authentication official authorizes this PM service.

Additional guidance on the DoD National Relocation Guaranteed Home Sale or Property Management services can be obtained at the AFPC Civilian Permanent Change of Home Page Web site: <http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/DPC/pcs/pcs.htm>

## **Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) Employee Limits in Contributing to the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP)**

If you are a high-salaried FERS employee, you should keep the annual contributions limit in mind when deciding how much you will contribute to your TSP account each pay period. If you reach the annual maximum too quickly, you could lose the opportunity to receive some Agency Matching Contributions. If you reach the annual limit before the end of the year, your contributions (to include your Agency Matching Contribution) will stop. The amount you could lose in Agency Matching Contributions would most likely be far greater than the earnings you might receive by making Employee Contributions sooner.

The annual limit for 2004 is \$13,000. This amount will increase each year by \$1000 until 2006. After 2006, amounts will be subject to increase to reflect inflation.

To determine a dollar amount that you can contribute each pay period to ensure that your contributions are spaced out over all pay periods for that year in such a way that you receive the maximum Agency Matching Contributions, go to <http://www.tsp.gov/calc/index.html>.

## **Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) Participant Statements No Longer Mailed Automatically**

Effective Jan 04, TSP participant statements will not be automatically mailed to TSP participants. Future quarterly participant statements will only be mailed to participants who request to have their statements mailed to them. Otherwise, the statements will be available from the TSP web site.

To have statements mailed, the following must be accomplished: Go to the website [www.tsp.gov](http://www.tsp.gov) click on Account Access, then Account Transactions and then log into your personal TSP account. Enter your SSAN and pin number. Once logged in, select the option "Participant Statements." The option "Have statements mailed to me" will appear. Press the "Continue" button and your statements will be mailed to you quarterly. You may also call the ThriftLine at (504) 255-8777 (TDD: (504) 255-5113 or complete the attached TSP form and mail it as explained on the form to be received by TSP no later than **1 December 2003**.

Additional questions on having your TSP participant statement mailed should be directed to Ms. Ollie Wilson (DSN: 480-4212 or [olliemae.wilson@ramstein.af.mil](mailto:olliemae.wilson@ramstein.af.mil)) or Ms. Marina Kappler (DSN: 480-4212 or [marina.kappler@ramstein.af.mil](mailto:marina.kappler@ramstein.af.mil)).

## **Take Advantage of the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) Open Season: 15 October-31 December 2003**

TSP is an easy, long-term retirement savings plan that everyone should consider. It is a great supplement to military and civilian retirement plans. TSP offers investors the chance for lower taxes each year they contribute while not having to pay taxes on earnings until they reach retirement. Employees can take out loans and make withdrawals from their TSP account. Employees can keep their account even if they leave military or federal service. Investment money is deposited directly from each paycheck so employees never have to think about it. That makes it easy for employees to 'pay themselves first' while only investing what they deem appropriate.

Open-season period (15 October – 31 December 2003) is the best time to open an account or make changes to an existing one. As with any individual retirement account, the sooner contributions begin, the better.

Additional information on TSP can be found at <http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/dpc/best/Newsletters/BEST%20Newsletter%20Aug%2003.pdf>, <http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/dpc/BEST/tsp-page.htm>, and <http://tsp.gov>.

Information on how to make TSP changes can be found at [http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/dpc/best/docs/How\\_to\\_Access\\_the\\_System-Web.pdf](http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/dpc/best/docs/How_to_Access_the_System-Web.pdf) and [http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/dpc/best/docs/How\\_to\\_Access\\_the\\_System-Phone.pdf](http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/dpc/best/docs/How_to_Access_the_System-Phone.pdf).

Employees should note that if they are calling from Germany they must dial 99 from a DSN line, then dial 0800 2255 288 for AT&T access, and then dial 800 997 2378. If they are calling from a country other than Germany, employees must dial the AT&T access code from that country, which can be obtained at [http://www.att.com/international\\_business/dialing\\_guide/country-diallist.cgi](http://www.att.com/international_business/dialing_guide/country-diallist.cgi).

Questions or problems regarding making TSP changes should be referred to Ms. Marina Kappler or Ms. Ollie Wilson, Human Resources Assistants in the Civilian Personnel Flight (CPF). They can be reached at DSN 480-4212/Comm: 06371-47-4212 or at [marina.kappler@ramstein.af.mil](mailto:marina.kappler@ramstein.af.mil) or [ollie.wilson@ramstein.af.mil](mailto:ollie.wilson@ramstein.af.mil).

## **Release No. 089 'One click, one call' customer service arrives for pay, personnel issues**

**AIR FORCE PERSONNEL CENTER** - A one-stop customer service phone number and web page are up and running, linking several call centers and online resources Air Force people use when managing personnel and pay information.

A single phone number and a companion website now make it easier for Air Force active-duty and reserve component military, as well as U.S. appropriated fund civilian employees to find what they need quickly, officials said.

Customers can find answers to questions by calling toll-free (800) 616-3775 or visiting <http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/cst>. Until now the burden's been on Air Force people to determine which agency handles a particular issue before contacting customer service by phone or on the web. Customers will be able to access any of the following support services by using the new number and website:

Air Force Contact Center (General military personnel inquiries, including discrimination and sexual harassment concerns and assistance in navigating the vMPF application)

ARPC Denver (Air Force Reserve and Guard personnel inquiries)

DFAS-Cleveland Contact Center (Air Force Military Pay Inquiries and assistance with the myPay application)

AFPC Technical Assistance Center (TAC) (Technical support for applications such as vMPF, Assignment Management System, AFPC Secure and PC-III)

AFPC Recruiting Service Center (Civilian appropriated fund job opportunities)

AFPC Benefits and Entitlements Service Team (Civilian appropriated fund benefits and entitlements)

This latest evolution in customer self-service is the product of revolutionary cooperation between different agencies inside and outside of the Air Force, officials said.

"A substantial partnership between military and civilian personnel, Air Force financial services (military pay), and Defense Finance and Accounting Service-years in the making-is making one-stop customer service possible," said James Short, the Air Force's deputy assistant secretary for financial operations (financial management).

"It goes beyond just a phone number and a web page," said Roger Blanchard, assistant deputy chief of staff for personnel. "What our customer service transformation team is beginning to do is actually combine customer service efforts behind the scenes to serve customers faster and more efficiently."

Several of the linked call centers reside at the personnel center, where leaders have been facilitating the consolidation of Air Force customer service operations.

"We are making sure that customer service is a lot more than a 1-800 number," said Maj. Gen. Tom O'Riordan, personnel center commander. "Our focus is making sure we meet the needs of the field, and that we accelerate those changes which make life simpler for the commander and our airmen," he said.

Customers calling from international locations and hearing impaired employees should continue to dial the number they currently use to access support for personnel and/or pay matters, officials said. The new toll-free number should begin accommodating foreign area calls early next year, officials said.

The current BEST Overseas Access Number is 0800-2255-288.

Local POCs for BEST are Ollie Wilson and Marina Kappler at 480-4212.

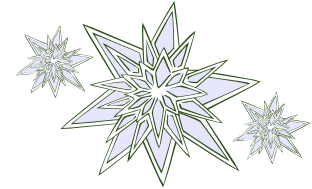
For Employment questions, please use our Customer Service Office, 480-7092.

*(AFPC is located at Randolph AFB, Texas.)*

## Whistleblower Disclosures

The Office of Special Counsel (OSC) provides a safe channel through which current and former federal employees, and applicants for employment, may disclose information that they believe shows:

- a violation of law, rule or regulation,
- gross mismanagement,
- gross waste of funds,
- abuse of authority, or
- a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety.



The OSC disclosure channel differs from other government whistleblower hotline channels in at least three ways:

- federal law guarantees confidentiality to the whistleblower;
- the Special Counsel may order an agency head to investigate and report on the disclosure; and
- after any such investigation, the Special Counsel must send the agency's report, with the whistleblower's comments, to the President and Congress.

## Procedures

The OSC does not independently investigate allegations reported through its disclosure channel. The law requires the Special Counsel to send the information to the head of the agency concerned if the Special Counsel determines that there is a substantial likelihood that the information discloses the kind of wrongdoing described in the statute. The OSC will not divulge the identity of a whistleblower unless he or she consents.

When the Special Counsel sends the information to the agency, the agency head must conduct an investigation and submit a report to the Special Counsel. The Special Counsel sends the agency report, along with any comments provided by the whistleblower, and any comments or recommendations by the Special Counsel, to the President and the congressional committees with jurisdiction over the agency.

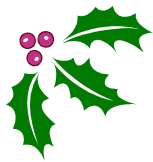
If the OSC does not send the whistleblower's disclosures to an agency head, it returns the information and any accompanying documents to the whistleblower. The OSC sends the whistleblower a letter explaining why the Special Counsel did not refer the information. This letter will let the whistleblower know what other disclosure channels may be available.

For more information visit the OSC website at [www.osc.gov](http://www.osc.gov)

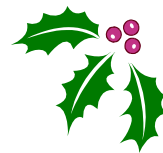
## EDI System – The new way to submit injury claim forms

The new Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) Tracking System for US Appropriated Fund Civilian Injury Reports allows supervisors to electronically submit the completed CA-1, Federal Employee's Notice of Traumatic Injury and Claim for Continuation of Pay/Compensation, and CA-2, Notice of Occupational Disease and Claim for Compensation. Employees and supervisors now will complete the claim form on the internet using the EDI Tracking System ([https://isdmid2.cpms.osd.mil/web\\_html/static\\_java\\_edi\\_sup.html](https://isdmid2.cpms.osd.mil/web_html/static_java_edi_sup.html)) electronically submit the claim form to our Injury Compensation Program Administrator (ICPA) in the Civilian Personnel Flight for authentication. The ICPA will then transmit the information to the Office of Workers' Compensation Program (OWCP).

For questions and/or assistance, please contact Marina Kappler or Ollie Wilson at 480-4212 or by e-mail at [marina.kappler@ramstein.af.mil](mailto:marina.kappler@ramstein.af.mil) or [Olliemaec.Wilson@ramstein.af.mil](mailto:Olliemaec.Wilson@ramstein.af.mil).



## *Classification*



### Classification Appeals

Employees have the right to appeal the classification of their positions at any time. Employees who believe their jobs are in the wrong pay category or have been given the wrong title, series, or grade, have the right to file a classification appeal.

In discussing classification appeals, we are talking about the employees who believe their jobs ought to be in a different pay plan, title, series, or higher grade, or about employees who wish to appeal their positions' downgrade. We are not talking about classification appeal cases involving discrimination complaints or downgrading actions where grade retention does not apply. Those cases may have different appeal channels and procedures, and employees should contact their servicing position classification specialist for any needed advice/assistance.

Employees in wage grade positions must first appeal the classification of their positions to the Department of Defense (DoD), and must be submitted through this office. If they do not agree with the DoD decision, they can appeal to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM).

Employees in general schedule (GS) positions can appeal to OPM or DoD. However, GS employees who appeal to DoD can, if the decision is unfavorable, appeal to OPM, but employees who first appeal to OPM and receive an unfavorable decision have exhausted their appeal rights since OPM is the final authority on classification appeals.

All classification appeals require the submission of specific data from the employee, the supervisor, and the position classification specialist. Employees are encouraged to submit their

appeals through the civilian personnel office so we can include the required material. Failure to do so causes unnecessary delays in getting an appeal decision.

Information on processing a position classification appeal can be obtained at the DoD and OPM websites: [www.cpms.osd.mil/fas/class/pages/cl\\_filing.htm](http://www.cpms.osd.mil/fas/class/pages/cl_filing.htm) and [www.opm.gov/classapp](http://www.opm.gov/classapp)

## Classification Appeal Myths

Every employee has the right to appeal the classification of his/her position if it is believed that the position is improperly classified. However, there are misunderstandings associated with this process.

One myth is that it is a simple process. The reality is that if an employee wants to win an appeal, the burden of proof is on him/her to demonstrate, using applicable OPM standards, where the classifier has erred in interpretation and/or application of the standard.

Another myth is that classification appeals are a risk-free avenue. Employees believe that the appellant level will simply rule yes or no on their request for a higher grade. Nothing could be further from the truth. When the appellate level adjudicates an appeal, the job is completely classified from scratch. And statistically, if the grade changes there is just as much likelihood of the grade going down as up. An appeal at another base involved a GS-7 Computer Assistant requesting reclassification as a Computer Specialist, GS-9 or higher. The decision from DOD came back as a GS-3. The appellant lost four grades.

A third myth is that comparison to the classification of other jobs can be a basis for upgrading an appealed job. The appellate level will respond to the inclusion of other jobs in an appeal package with the answer that law prohibits them from classifying position by comparison to other positions. The appellate level will state that the only legal method of classifying jobs is by comparison to applicable OPM standards. The inclusion of other job descriptions such as from other bases, which may or may not be correctly classified, does not help an appellant's case. It only has the potential to have those jobs and classifications reviewed and to possibly trigger a DOD- or OPM-mandated consistency review which could be command-wide and possibly result in downgrades of those jobs at other bases. The bottom line is if you choose to exercise your right to appeal, be ready to assume the burdens and risks involved.



## *Training*

### **Training Planning and Execution using CATNIP (Civilian Automated Training Input Program)**

CATNIP is an Air Force wide web based program, which requires base level organizations to do their training projections on line and get them approved from base level all the way up to Air Force level. Currently the 11th Wing is in the process of expanding the system by a financial package, which will enable the base level Civilian Training Manager to allocate funds to a



specific training activity previously planned. We will also have to keep track of the actual cost of our training activities in CATNIP. Although total impact is still being assessed, one thing is clear. We must all do a much better job of forecasting our training requirements and making sure we execute what we projected. The first step in this process is to appoint someone in your group to be responsible for managing the civilian training program. These individuals can receive a login and password to CATNIP so they may submit course requirements directly into the system. If you have not done so already, we suggest you appoint a CATNIP course submitter in your agencies and contact us at the Civilian Personnel Office Training Section (480-2741) to set up a login and password and to receive a short introduction on how the program works.

POC: 86 MSS/DPCT: DSN 480-2741

## **Training No-Shows, Cancellations, and Substitutions can be costly**

When an employee is scheduled for training, it is critical the employee be available to attend. Once confirmed in a class, other duties and activities should be scheduled around the employee's attendance. Cancellations or student substitutions should be rare and, if necessary due only to an emergency situation. These instances need to be coordinated through the responsible Employee Development Specialist in the Civilian Personnel Flight as soon as possible.

Last minute cancellations or unsuccessful substitution efforts can be costly to the Air Force and your unit, in terms of both direct training costs and lost opportunities for others when available seats are unfilled. Training vendors often allow only a partial (if any) refund of registration fees for no-shows or late cancellations. In other cases, training vendors are paid for instructing a defined number of students, whether or not that number actually attends. This concept is also true of Air Force formal schools, which incur the operating expenses to provide training even when full capacity is not achieved.

In certain instances, an employee may be required to reimburse the government for the cost of training if they withdraw or fail to complete the course satisfactorily. The circumstances must be reviewed on a case-by-case basis to determine if reimbursement is indicated. Employees must consult with their supervisor before discontinuing attendance at training prior to course completion.

POC: 86 MSS/DPCT: DSN 480-2741



## *Data Systems*

### **Request For Personnel Action (RPA) Submission**

The Civilian Personnel Office is working toward a goal of all organizations submitting RPAs electronically by 1 Jan 2004. After that date all organizations should no longer submit the hardcopy SF-52. We are working with organizations to connect them to our Oracle system and train POCs in generating and submitting electronic RPAs. This process will be much easier to accomplish since the application is web-based and can be installed by your System

Administrator in very little time. The process will be started by requesting a User Id from the CPF Data Section who will send you a worksheet to be completed. Please mail your request to 86 MSS/DPCD@ramstein.af.mil.

## *Did You Know...*

If you are PCSing and you are not eligible to receive Living Quarters Allowance, you will not receive Temporary Quarters Subsistence Allowance prior to your departure from your overseas location.

TSP Open Season ends **31 Dec 03**.

